

GUN

Continued

to mitigate its contamination of nearby streams back in the fall of 2016, eventually coming to a compromise requiring the club either prohibit the use of lead ammunition at the range or implement a plan within 18 months ensuring shooting will no longer be into or over the creek and adjacent wetlands. The club was not required to clean up the shot that had already accumulated, due to fears by the agency this would lead to the further destruction of the wetlands.

The gun club chose to move forward with a mitigation plan, however the proposal they submitted – creating a new set of trap fields on their property – has a number of key errors, environmentalists say. According to the proposal, in addition to orienting the shooting away from the creek, consistent mowing and annual soil tests around the range, lead reclamation would occur every 5 years within the range's shot zone – a length of time that, while considered to be in line with “best practices” in the industry – environmentalists say is inadequate.

“In other words, they would check once a year to see if they need to throw some lime dust around to slow down the leaching of the lead into the groundwater,” Gay Nicholson, president of Sustainable Tompkins, wrote in a letter to Ludlowville and Lansing residents. “And they would let the lead accumulate in the environment for FIVE years before bothering to collect and dispose of any of it. And somehow they are claiming to be able to effectively collect it from the grass and leaves and other forest litter on these hillsides. No other mention of any details of collecting and disposing are mentioned.”

According to Nicholson, the gun club has shot an estimated 200 tons of lead since opening in 1955, much of which ended up into Salmon Creek and nearby wetlands and forested slopes. Despite this fact, alternative ideas to mitigate lead pollution, such as switching to steel shot or installing a “lead curtain,” she said, have been denied. This is crucial, she said: according to a 2010 analysis by the Sporting Arms and Ammunition Manufacturers' Institute, lead shot can be extremely mobile in an ecosystem, dissolving in storm runoff or through the air as dust particles. And the longer it sits, the greater the opportunity for contamination.

“I have no idea why gun club members think it is okay to let lead accumulate for five years before bothering to clean up after themselves. I doubt they will be able to actually clean it all up with their five-year plan. Do they think five years of

Salmon Creek



Salmon Creek, which abuts the Lansing Rod & Gun Club, is becoming polluted with the lead from the gun range according to studies.

falling leaves and vegetation growth and dieback won't obscure the lead? Do they think the more acidic environment of decomposing vegetation won't leach some of the lead into groundwater?”

These concerns, critics of the plan say, are serious. Exposure to high levels of lead has been tied to neurological disorders in children and have been shown to present significant problems for wildlife and livestock. Waterfowl, frogs and other amphibians have been shown to be especially susceptible to lead shot, which they can mistake for food.

“Lansing residents have the double whammy of living downwind of a coal plant which has lead and mercury emissions and living downstream of the gun club, which has distributed hundreds of tons of lead shot all over the banks of Salmon Creek just above the swimming hole at the base of Ludlowville Falls, where all the kids have been swimming and guys fishing for trout for decades and decades,” Nicholson wrote in an email. “I wonder how many hundredweight of pellets are in the bottom of the pool below the falls.”

Moving forward, the Planning Board has a number of issues to consider: While they could have say over the parking lots with ease, as far as environmental management is concerned the gun club has been allowed to operate for decades and – despite the fact additional pollution could occur – the board has to decide whether to treat the project's environmental review as it would a new development, as opposed to a documented polluter trying to clean itself up within the realm of the law.

“It's a grandfathered use, and there's no reason to deny it on that base of things,” Planning Board member Dean Shea said.

The board will be putting the subject to further study at its next meeting, including where the facility will fall along the creek's floodplain and additional consideration of the actions the board can legally demand of the range. The next meeting is Monday, March 26th at 6:30 p.m. at Lansing Town Hall, 29 Auburn Road, Lansing.

HEALTH

Continued

transmitted diseases (approximately 200 less than the average county in New York) all exceed averages demonstrated statewide.

However, a number of problem areas were noted: Tompkins County ranks 1 percent higher than the state average in adult smoking rate at 15 percent, and was well above the binge drinking rate of 13 percent. (Tompkins County counts a rate of 21 percent.)

Social and economic factors also present a significant issue, but not just locally. Income inequality in Tompkins County was in line with a rate seen across New York State which, overall, is two points higher than the national average. In addition, 20 percent of Tompkins County residents experienced severe housing problems, four percentage points lower than across the state but still substantially higher than the national average of 9 percent.

Compared to nearby counties, Tompkins County ranks significantly higher than its neighbors. The closest finisher contiguous was Seneca County at 18th, with Cayuga County finishing 23rd, Cort-

land County 38th, Tioga County 40th and Schuyler County 47th and Chemung 49th.

While a valuable tool for evaluating problem areas in each county, the major lesson attempted by the report centers on the various influences on issues of equality in individual states. According to the report for New York State, “health disparities emerge when some groups of people have more access to opportunities and resources over their lifetime and across generations.” Social and economic factors, the report notes, include connected and supportive communities, good schools, stable jobs, and safe neighborhoods, factors that have an outsized influence on other important drivers of health equity, particularly on our ability to afford medical care or housing or make healthy dietary choices, for example. “The choices we make are based on the choices we have,” the report states.

Teens Invited to Apply for Summer Jobs at Library

Teens 14 years old and up may apply through the Ithaca Youth Bureau's YES program and those 14 to 20 years through Tompkins County's Workforce New York Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) to work at the library this summer in a variety of jobs, including:

Working with Children and supporting librarians as Youth Services Assistance and/or interacting with children in our Maker is In and Reader is In programs (making crafts with children and reading to children);

Working in the Circulation Department emptying book bins, preparing books for recirculation into the system, and shelving audiovisual items.

Working with Teens as a Camp Counselor in our week-long Writing and Gaming Camp; helping run Summer Reading Program activities; helping with other Teen Center projects; serving as a blogger reviewing teen books.

The Youth Bureau will be accepting applications starting March 19. Apply at <http://www.yesithaca.org/>

If you're interested in the county's Workforce New York Summer Youth Employment Program, please contact Yvette at yrbio@tepl.org for an application. You are encouraged to apply as soon as possible.

We are looking for teens who are dependable, enjoy working with people, are ready to take initiative and lead, love reading and being creative, and who want to learn more about the world of libraries.